



# Updates from the Field BEST PRACTICES

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## PROMOTING FAMILY PLANNING IN A TRIBAL COMMUNITY

### Background

Sultan Kudarat is a province in the Central Mindanao Region. Five of its 12 municipalities have indigenous Manobos, a Filipino ethnic group, among their constituents. The Manobos marry at a very young age, with some female Manobos marrying by the age of 12. A regular Manobo family, therefore, tends to be large, with an average of six children.

To help improve the reproductive health behaviors of the Manobos, the Provincial Health Office (PHO) of Sultan Kudarat devised a strategy to facilitate the promotion of family planning in areas where this indigenous group lives.

### The Intervention

In 1999, the PHO of Sultan Kudarat and the Municipal Health Office of Senator Ninoy Aquino, named after the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr., organized a Highlanders (indigenous people residing in the mountains) Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Team in Sen. Ninoy Aquino. This municipality, 78 miles from the provincial capital of Isulan, is comprised of 20 *barangays* (villages) and has a population of 30,544, of which 20% is indigenous Manobo. It contains the largest indigenous population in the province.

The initiative required that IEC materials be reproduced for the team's use. With funds from the province's LGU Performance Program (LPP) grant, the educated members of the Manobo Highlanders IEC Team translated the English version of a family planning flipchart into their Manobo dialect. Representatives from the Center for Health Development-Central Mindanao, the PHO, and the Municipal Health Office (MHO) assisted with the translation. The PHO initially printed 27 copies of the local version of the flipchart at a cost of PhP700 (US\$14.00) per copy. Another 100 and 70 copies were printed using LPP and UNFPA funds, respectively.



A member of the Highlanders IEC Team explaining family planning concepts to a group of Manobos.

Next, the PHO identified and recruited new members for the IEC team. Individuals were selected based on their ability to read and write and their degree of influence in the community. More trainees were recruited from those *barangays* with a high percentage of Manobo residents.

#### Topics Addressed by the Sen. Ninoy Aquino IEC Flipchart

- Good health (healthy body, mind, & emotional life)
- Birth spacing to limit numbers of children
- The goals of family planning (the health of the mother, child, & family)
- Parts of the male reproductive system & their functions
- Parts of the female reproductive system & their functions
- The menstrual cycle
- Ovulation
- Fertilization
- Implantation
- Family planning methods
- Discussing family planning and contraceptive methods as a couple
- Visiting the health center to ensure safe pregnancy

Once the first group of IEC team members was chosen, they were given orientation training on the use and contents of the flipchart. The training requires each participant to present specific topics covered by the flipchart in front of the trainer and the group. The trainer and group then critiqued each presenter. This process ensures that the



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trainees understand the concepts and messages and can effectively communicate them to their audience.

## Status of Implementation

To date, 35 Manobos in the Sen. Ninoy Aquino Municipality have been trained and now participate in the IEC team. The members consist of community leaders, students, and Barangay Health Workers. Armed with their flipcharts, members of the team go from house to house in their communities as part of the IEC campaign. In addition, they conduct community assemblies. Community assemblies, which are organized/convened by community leaders on a need basis, serve as venues to inform the people. Through the persistent efforts of the team, family planning awareness and practice among the Manobos in the Municipality of Sen. Ninoy Aquino has significantly improved.

For example, the number of family planning users among the Manobos significantly increased from 90 in 1999 to 376 as of June 2002. This represents an increase in the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) of 33.3 percentage points (from 13% to 46.3%). In Kiadsam, one of Sen. Ninoy Aquino's three barangays with the highest number of indigenous people, 75% of married women of reproductive age now practice family planning.

In the first half of 2002, the CPR for the entire municipality increased from 34.4% to 58.5%. The mean age at marriage increased to 18, while the number of children now ranges from 2-4, a decrease from an average of six during the early 90s. It is also worth noting that while the team originally addressed family planning, it has expanded its IEC campaign to include other related health and literacy programs like the National Tuberculosis Program, Malaria Control Program, and Primary Health Care.

With the demonstrated success of the initiative in Sen. Ninoy Aquino, the PHO of Sultan Kudarat organized IEC teams in three other Manobo-populated municipalities. There are now 30 trained Manobos in each of these areas.

Due to limited funds, particularly for the printing of the flipcharts, the PHO is not currently conducting further orientation trainings. It is exploring alternative sources of funds to sustain the initiative. While the municipalities are capable and willing to conduct the subsequent training courses on their own, they nonetheless need the PHO to provide flipcharts for use by the trainees and members of the IEC teams since they do not have the resources for the reproduction of flipcharts. To remedy the situation, the PHO is now encouraging municipalities to allocate resources from their regular budget for the printing of the flipcharts. The municipality of Sen. Ninoy Aquino is now gearing towards that direction.



Sen. Ninoy Aquino's first batch of trainees who are now members of the municipality's Highlanders IEC Team.

Number of Family Planning Users, by Method  
Sen. Ninoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat  
1999-2002

Method	Indigenous People				Total SNA Population			
	1999	2000	2001	2002*	1999	2000	2001	2002*
Condom	0	2	6	1	77	102	113	109
Injectable	23	74	104	148	320	514	582	567
IUD	2	4	5	5	279	247	283	305
LAM	41	65	60	84	270	282	358	383
Pill	21	91	103	124	842	1,053	1,313	1,187
NFP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Male Ster.	3	6	5	5	6	10	13	12
Female Ster.	0	7	8	9	93	120	132	146
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>2,328</b>	<b>2,794</b>	<b>2,709</b>
<b>No. of MWRAs</b>	634	799	776	812	5,487	4,533	4,581	4,630
<b>CPR</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31.16</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>51.35</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>58.5</b>

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Please address all inquiries to:  
**Management Sciences for Health**  
Unit TN No. 4, 10/F Times Plaza Building  
U.N. Ave, Ermita, Manila, Philippines  
Tel. Nos: (632) 525-7145/52/56  
Fax No.: (632) 525-6086 E-mail: info@msh.org.ph